

# MODERN FREETHINKER

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It begins as a way of  
thinking ; The fulfilment  
is in a way of life.

—Varkey Shantistan

# JATRA BANNED

— Shabbeer Ahmed reports from Bangalore.

The Government of Karnataka should be appreciated for the bold step taken by it in banning the annual jatra (festival) of Goddess Kenukumba in the month of March, during which hundreds of men, women and children offer nude worship in the remote village of Chandragutti in Shimoga District.

This age-old practice was banned by the Government on recommendations of the Chaunaveerappa Commission which went into the issue.

Last year when some social organisations attempted to clothe nude devotees, violence sparked, the angry devotees forcibly stripped the cloths and made naked many social workers, journalists and policemen.

The annual two-day jatra which was to commence on 8th March wore a deserted look with 3000 people in the village preferred to remain indoors due to the ban order. Nearly 2000 heavily armed police personnel were on guard to prevent the nude worship and to maintain law and order. The policemen barred entry to all strangers. Reporters were allowed only after the written permission given by the District Deputy Commissioner and they were escorted by the police without allowing them to move freely. Temporary checkpoints were created manned by police on roads leading to Chandragutti to prevent the inflow of devotees from other surrounding districts. Even the journalists who went to the place were checked thoroughly at these checkpoints. Entry of vehicles including regular bus banned. The devotees were not even allowed by the police to offer the usual worship in the village temple atop a hillock.

The business community resented the 'high-handedness' of the Government in cancelling of the jatra. The average turnover during the jatra was Rs. 10 lakhs. It also resulted in a loss to the temple trust of Rs. 2 lakhs.

The temple authorities who are surprised by the sudden cancellation of the jatra, for the first time in the history of the temple are worried about the grave consequences if the Goddess become angry. They say there will be outbreak of epidemics.

Anyhow the Government of Karnataka did the right thing by cancelling the jatra. It is a first step to wipe off superstitious beliefs in public.

As there are no supernatural powers existing in universe, the grave consequences out of the wrath of Goddess is a myth. Each and everyone of us should be firm in destroying all blind beliefs and superstitions in the society whenever we find them.

Modern Freethinker

## Modern Freethinker

JOURNAL OF THE INDIAN RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

Editor : SANAL EDAMARUKU

### A Report from Kerala

## In the name of Secularism

The new state government of Kerala, headed by Com. E.K. Nayanar, a veteran Marxist leader, has been elected to power as Kerala's electorate responded to its highlighting of the slogans of secularism and anti-communalism. The very slogans that were taken up by Rationalists and vigorously propagated for the last one decade were responsible in forcing the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to sever its communal links with Muslim League and Kerala Congress, which it defended althroughout. Now when the CPI (M) realised that the slogans of the rationalist movement were getting currency, gradually it shifted from its earlier stand of defending communal coalitions and became neo-champion of anti-communalism, which paid them reasonable dividends as votes.

However, the clever wolf in sheep skin has shown its true colour within the first month in power.

Lonappan Nambadan, a notorious Christian religious extremist, who contested the Irijalakkuda constituency, as an independent candidate with CPI (M) support, got elected. As soon as he entered the state assembly, this former Kerala Congress leader was not only given membership in CPI (M) Parliamentary party, but also was promoted as a minister.

Mr. Lonappan Nambadan always represented the interests of the Christian fundamentalists and extremists. When the government owned magazine of the Planning Commission, "Yojana", published a special issue on various aspects of Rationalism and Scientific temper, Mr. Nambadan demanded in the previous state assembly that the issue of Yojana be banned, and the editor of the magazine be dismissed. This intolerant

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communalist has also burned the issues of "Yojana" at a public meeting.

Yet another example of the "Secular" functioning of Mr. Lonappan Nambadan is evident from his fight against a literary study on "Last Temptation" of Kazantzakis, that was included in a text book for graduate level students. Following Nambadan's demand in the State Assembly, the education Minister who belonged to the communal 'Kerala Congress' happily banned the book that contained the study on Kazantzakis, as a text book in Calicut University. Indeed, Mr. Lonappan Nambadan, a CPI(M) minister, is the symbol of the anti-communalism that the CPI(M) represents.

The controversial drama "The Sixth Holy Wound of Christ", was banned earlier by the Congress government, at all the places where the drama was arranged to be performed. Interestingly, before the state elections, the CPI (M) came to the forefront of the struggle against the ban of the drama. Now, that the CPI (M) is in power, they are more eager to satisfy the vested interests of the Church, in putting down the performance right of a secular drama. Alas! these all are done in the name of Secularism and anti-communalism.

### Indian Rationalist Association

14th National Conference

Ernakulam, Kerala.

### Dates Postponed

The 14th Biennial National Conference of Indian Rationalist Association will be held in the month of September, 1987, instead of the earlier announced dates in May, 87. A decision to this effect has been taken by the reception committee at Ernakulam, in consultation with the central office of Indian Rationalist Association.

The state conference of Kerala Rationalists that marks the 31st year of the organising of the association in Kerala, will also be held along with the National Conference. The Reception committee headed by Mr. K. K. Madhava (Acting President), C. I.ommen (Convener), Captain Meleth Krishnan, Sreeni Pattathanam, Chirakkandam M. A. Salam, Gopalan Vaidyar etc. comprises of 100 members.

We also report you the sad demise of Dr. R.P. Unnithan the chairman of the Reception Committee.

### Secularism under Indian Constitution-4

## Secular State and Secular Society

—Justice R. A. Jahagirdar

Worse still, is the provisions contained in Article 28 of the Constitution. It says that no religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of the State funds. You will notice a sharp difference between this provision of the Constitution of India and the Constitution of America. In America there is a total prohibition of religious instruction in any educational institution supported by the State funds. On the other hand, under our Constitution as per Article 28, it is only that educational institution which is wholly maintained out of State funds that is prohibited from providing religious instruction. In other words, all those denominational schools which receive grants-in-aid from the State are not prohibited from giving religious instruction. That is because those schools are not wholly maintained out of State funds. It is true that clause (3) of Article 28 provides that no person attending any educational institution recognised by the State or receiving aid out of State funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction or to attend any religious worship in that institution. This itself, in my opinion, is not enough. A denominational institution, if it receives aid out of State funds should not be permitted to indulge in religious instruction or religious propaganda even though such instruction or propaganda is not compulsory for all the students of the institution. When such religious instruction or religious propaganda is carried on by schools which receive State assistance in funds, it necessarily means that to that extent there is a dent in the secular character of the State of India.

From what has been said so far, it must be clear that there is no wall of separation between the State and religion in India as it is there in the United States of America. On the other hand, there is a marked reluctance to bring about such a separation. Take for example Article 220A. This specifically

mentions that certain sums shall be paid over every year for the maintenance of Hindu temples which were formerly in the States of Travancore and Cochin. No doubt this provision was inserted in the Constitution in the year 1956 after the States' Reorganisation Act under which parts of the States of Travancore and Cochin were transferred to Tamil Nadu. This, however, is no excuse for charging public funds with an obligation to support religious institutions.

I may also invite your attention to Schedule 7, List I, Entry 63. This enables Parliament to legislate in respect of institutions such as Banaras Hindu University and Aligarh Muslim University. As is well known, though these institutions bear the names of two religions they are not in law religious institutions. The Government of India spends some Rs. six crore on the Aligarh Muslim University. Recently, there has been a sustained demand for what has been called the restoration of the minority character of the Aligarh Muslim University. This is being demanded under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution. The most authoritative judgment of the Supreme Court has put the constitutional position beyond all controversy and that is, that the Aligarh Muslim University is not a minority institution and there is no question of any freedom arising under Article 6 of the Constitution (See *S. Azeez Dasha vs. Union of India*, A.I.R. 1968 S.C. 662). Aligarh Muslim University is a creature of the Statute as also Banaras Hindu University. It is not an institution which is established and maintained by the Muslims and therefore what has been called the minority character of that institution cannot be restored to it because it never possessed that character. If, however, Parliament proceeds to make a law imprinting the minority character on that university it will necessarily mean that public funds will be used for supporting an institution belonging to a particular religion. This will necessarily involve the destruction of the secular principle. I must hasten to add that a university established by the State for the study of one or more religions will not on that account be a religious institution.

At this stage I may also refer to the judgment given by the

Supreme Court of India in *Sardar Syedna Taher Saifuddin Saheb V. State of Bombay* (A.I.R. 1962 S.C. 853). In this case the constitutional validity of the Bombay Prevention of Excommunication Act 1949, was involved. In the light of the provisions contained in Article 26 (b) of the Constitution of India, the Bombay High Court, both at the trial stage and at the appellate stage, had upheld the constitutional validity of the Act by pointing out that by denying the right of the Bohra chief to excommunicate the members belonging to the Bohra community. The Bombay Legislature had not done anything which was contrary to Article 26 of the Constitution. While so holding, the Bombay High Court was of the opinion that the Bohra Chief could not claim the right conferred upon the religious denomination under Article 26 in order to put forward a claim of excommunicating or expelling members and thus depriving them of the rights and privileges attaching to the membership of that denomination. This judgment of the High Court was unfortunately reversed by majority judgment of the Supreme Court which held that the right to excommunicate resting in the Bohra Chief was an essential part of the religion of the Bohras. The right of the Bohra Chief to excommunicate could not be taken away by any Act made by the State. C. J. Sinha has pointed out in his minority judgment that the right of excommunication was not a purely religious matter and the effect of excommunication or expulsion would result in the exclusion of the expelled person from the exercise of rights in connection not only with places of worship but also from burying the dead in the community burial ground and other rights of a civil nature. If the judgment of the Bombay High Court had held the field, the history of the Bohras in India would have been different. The law of the land as laid down by the highest Court of the land has in my humble opinion diluted secularism in India. It is unfortunate that successive Parliaments which have often amended the Constitution to change the situations created by the Supreme Court's judgments have not thought it fit to alter the situation created by the judgment in the Bohra Chief's case.

Part IV of the Constitution contains what have been descri-

bed as Directive Principles of State Policy. These principles are not enforceable by any Court but are posited to be fundamental to the governance of the country. It has also been laid down that it shall be the duty of the State to apply these principles in making laws. Some of the principles cannot be transformed into the time-bound programme because of the paucity of funds and other difficulties. But Article 44 contains a directive which does not require any resources or funds but only courage and determination to secularise the citizenship of India. That Article directs that the State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India. Unfortunately even after more than thirty years since the Constitution came into force such an endeavour is not visible.

I MUST NOW TURN to the forty-second Amendment of the Constitution and see whether it has made any change towards the secularisation of the Constitution. Only two features are worth noting. In the preamble the word "secular" has been introduced; a new part, being Part IVA, consisting of only one article, being Article 31A, has been introduced. In the beginning I have already mentioned that a word or two in the Constitution will not determine its real character. Mentioning in the preamble that India is a secular State will not make it a secular State any more than mentioning that India is a paradise will make it a paradise. Moreover, a preamble is the least important and the least effective part of any enactment. It is clear, therefore, that the amendment of the preamble has not made any difference.

Article 31 A enumerates the fundamental duties of every citizen of India. It says that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India, among other things, to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood among all the people of India transcending religious diversities and to develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform. These are noble sentiments with a flavour of secularism. But how do you enforce these duties? Parliament has to make laws. Even in the absence of Article 31 A, Parliament did have the power to

*(Continued on page 13)*

## Shelter

—Joseph Edamaruku

Shelter comes next among the vital necessities of man. Although the earth is spotted with buildings of very many kinds, ranging from shanties and huts to palatial mansions of various dimensions and varied facilities, there are millions without a habitation. There are many who live on sidewalks while some fortunate mortals live in houses with the amenities of air-conditioning and heating. Why many are compelled to live in lowly huts or shacks that cannot protect them from cold or heat? Every man is entitled to get a congenial, comfortable habitation. Undoubtedly, people will come forward to demand and gain this right.

In addition to the fact that all people have not sufficient housing facilities, superstitions and customs have burdened construction of houses with chaos and waste. If the outlay and efforts expended in the field were utilized rationally, everyone could have been provided with a comfortable abode. The history of house construction will make it clear. Primitive men had their shelter in caves. They needed no efforts on their part. As population grew, caves were found to be insufficient; caves could not be had in enough numbers in all places. By using the branches of trees, they began to make huts. So they advanced one rung higher in the effort to conquer nature. It is from this discovery that they became able to raise sky scrapers later. Gradually they learned to pile up forest stones to make walls, and to thatch roof with wide slabs of stone. The Egyptians were the people to bring the innovation of bricks into construction. So a new era in construction of buildings was opened up on the banks of the Nile.

Within the span of a five hundred years, this method spread everywhere. The people of Assyria (Iraq) found that the burnt

brick is stronger than the raw one. In all the later civilizations, Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Crata etc., this method was adopted. This required more work. The patriarch of the tribe or the trader built more comfortable buildings. Though the Greeks preferred to build big houses using large slabs of stone that required the work of slaves and sculptors too. Those who could afford this, made big buildings. But the men who raised those buildings had to live in huts without the elementary amenities. This state of affairs continues even today. Big structures with 100 or 150 stories are common sight now in many urban cities. How many mansion buildings like the Buckingham Palace, Vatican Palace, the Kremlin, the Rashtrapathi Bhavan of the Indian President are there in the world! In the nooks and corners of the cities which are adorned by these engineering wonders, one can see countless rows of miserable huts that are shunned by air and light

Although vast sections of people are being denied proper housing, the scientific and technological advance in this field cannot be ignored.

It is easy to see big buildings built with cement and steel in cities. Some of them are either offices or bungalows or factories. Today, man can build any kind of building that is suitable for any particular purpose. It may be noted, that man achieved all these skills not owing to the founders of religions or prophets but to his free thought and research alone.

Though great progress has been achieved in house construction, primitive notions and beliefs also go hand in hand with it. When high rise buildings are built, many propitiatory deeds are performed for the proper firmness or solidity of the foundation. If prayer or propitiation can give firmness to foundation, cement and steel are not necessary. If cement, steel and proper accessories are not used in a building it will not have a solid structure, however much one pray

When monarchy and the feudal system were prevalent, stately buildings were built for the sake of pride, repute and nobility. Even now that pernicious tradition influences many

people. It is what the buildings constructed in Kerala villages with Gulf money shows. They are meant to excel the mansions of the former feudal potentates. The idea is not of building a comfortable and convenient house for the family to live in.

When a building is planned, the needs of the man and his family should be foreseen. The dimensions of the building and number of rooms must be determined accordingly. If it is intended for a writer or a lawyer, space for a library is essential or if it is meant for a photographer, a dark room is a must. A farmer needs a granary or a store house for grains. It is not only unnecessary waste but also wrong to build a house larger than the actually required one. Many people lose sight of the fact that money needlessly spent on house could be used for many other beneficial purposes. Building simply for ostentation is sheer foolishness.

It is relevant to refer to certain superstitions that exist in this field. Though the day of the old, big, low roofed, sprawling house shutting out air and light has gone forever, the age-old conceptions of the country carpenters have their way in this sphere even now. In South Ceylon and Kerala, families build their own house in their own plot. In most other places in India they live in villages, with houses built close to each other. This obviates separate location for separate houses. It is otherwise interalia, the location should be selected with an eye for the easy availability of air and light and water and easy passage to the road. But the "location experts" have no thought about such matters. They predict death or dangers if the location is wrong. Fearing this the superstitious people select inconvenient locations for houses

Carpenters will say that the houses should face either to the North or to the East. If the frontage is Eastward, the morning and evening sunshine is easily available in the rooms. The reason against the frontage being Southward might be the belief that God of Death will come from the South. There is no other basis for this. When roads were widened and cities improved, this superstitions have disappeared in many places. If one

travels along the highways, one can see numerous houses that face the South or the North.

Location by carpenters has become irrelevant because of the fact of the limited space available in cities.

Building single, separate houses may not be possible in future. A good percentage of arable land is now being taken over for building purposes. If flats can be constructed in village centres much space can be saved. If housing board and other agencies construct multistoried flats, there can be new changes in the modes of construction; such flats can incorporate more modern amenities.

Not only the owners of buildings but the engineers also are influenced by customs. No sufficient attempts are made to use new materials and to slash expenses. Family houses had been built in the past for many successive generations to live in. So they had to be extra strong and solid. The thickness of the walls of old houses would simply amaze you. Even the partition walls were unduly thick.

Walls not necessary for the overall strength of the building can be made of plywood or cement sheets with room space increased.

The above are only some of the factors which governments and individuals ought to take into account. Much more changes and innovations can be introduced into this field with the help of Science and Technology. More prominence and consideration should be given to the requirements of man than to superstitions and false sense of prestige. It is the duty of the society and nation to see to it that every man has place to sleep in.

While a lot of men do not have any shelter to save themselves from the inclemencies of nature or while they squirm in squalid holes, millions are spent for temples and churches for the non-existent gods. Drugging the people with the accounts of the golden mansions in the heaven, and filching from even the beggar's bowls, the priests and their henchmen, install idols

of stone in the temples. While people are groaning in freezing cold or wilt in horrid atmosphere on sidewalks or in stinking ugly holes, when people fall down dead owing to severe cold in December in the streets of the holy city of Ahmedabad, the doors of the house of the Almighty Viswanath are remaining shut against them. The men who drop down due to the unfearable heat of June are not permitted into the cool shades of the Birla Temple in New Delhi. Who knows whether those who have no place to lap their heads one day capture the massive temples of the stone gods to find a place of sleep for themselves.

*(Contd. next issue)*

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## Secular State and Secular Society

*(Continued from page 8)*

make laws in respect of all of the matters mentioned in Article 51 A. The forty-second Amendment the Constitution has thus not effected any change in the secular or non-secular character of the Constitution.

Ultimately a secular State can be built up only in a secular society. In my opinion if one builds up a secular society, it will in the long run lead to a secular State but not vice versa. Though our Constitution has several secular features or even if it is converted into fully secular Constitution, it will only mean that a secular document is born and not that a secular State is born. A secular State or secular society is never born. It has to be built up by the sustained and ceaseless efforts of the secularists, rationalists and scientific thinkers. The pitfalls and dangers of a non-secular approach must be demonstrated; the benefits of a secular society must be explained and brought home to both ignorant and the fanatic. It is not an easy task but on that account it cannot be given up. ●



## Rationalism—it begins as a way of thinking; The fulfilment is in a way of life

—Varkey Shantistan

For all rationalists reason is the supreme authority; which may be supplemented by instinct, common sense and life experience. A rationalist has an integrated personality. So, the above three inborn faculties, namely instinct, common sense and reason act in unison and never at cross purpose, and anything getting the approval of these three and verified by life experience, is accepted as truth and anything getting their disapproval is rejected as untruth, even though recommended by the highest authority on earth. In other words, a rationalist communicate direct with nature through the above inborn faculties without the help of any intermediary, and abstracts nature's truth.

Such a rational stand is only the start. Every individual formulates a working philosophy of life consciously or unconsciously and lives his life on the basis of that philosophy. The rationalist looks at nature, looks at life through the eye of reason and draws inferences and conclusions that are in tune with his reason and life experience. His philosophy of life is evolved out of these inferences and conclusions. The life philosophy of rationalists may vary from individual to individual in the minor details, but basically their philosophies are likely to be similar because their data and approach are more or less similar. The life philosophy of rationalists may be incomplete, but they are not likely to be contradictory to one another.

The next step is to evolve a system of ethics based on the philosophy of life. Rationalist ethics is altogether man-based and earth-bound. It is neither god-given or heaven-directed. It is independent of all external authority and altogether unrelated to any life after death. It is not a passport to heaven. Its basis is man and his life on earth. Rationalists are moral neither to please god nor to go to heaven after death, but because being moral is socially most convenient. We do not cut others' throat

because we do not want throats to be cut. We do not pick others' pockets because we do want our pockets to be picked. We do not rape another's sisters because we do not want our sisters to be raped. The rationale for morality is ever present in our social life on this earth. So, why seek external motivation like god's pleasure or entry to heaven after death? The rationalists do admit that moral codes may vary from time to time and place, because they are evolved out of the living conditions of man which also vary. Hence polygamy in Arabia at one time but monogamy elsewhere, because, generally speaking monogamy is socially more convenient. At the same time rationalists admit that there are certain universal and eternal values in ethics, because ethical laws are based on certain universal and eternal laws of nature and life. Two and two make four any time any place.

Certain truth may recommend itself to our reason and commonsense. So, it may be accepted provisionally. But the final test of truth is experience. Only when truth is experienced or realised in life can it be finally accepted. In that sense rationalists accept the supremacy of experience of reason. The taste of the pudding is in the eating. The test of truth is in life experience. Experiencing truth in life is proof positive that nature approves of that truth. And there is no better authority than nature.

As far as thinking is concerned, every individual should start on a clean slate. The elders have no right to condition the children or to brainwash them. If the elders were all agreed on the so called truths they preach, there may have been some justification for imposing them on children, similar to accepted truths like the spherical shape and rotation and revolution of heavenly bodies. But there is absolutely no agreement on the fundamental abstract truths preached by the religions.

In a very real sense our birth is an accident. Some are born rich, others poor, some in healthy, others in sickness. It is parents who impose their beliefs on children. Birth is an accident, and so is parentage. Children born in different contexts at different times are placed under different authorities by their



different parents. Since authorities are different their assumption also are different. And all these differences are due to the accident of birth. But children should not be made victims of accidents. It is quite unfair that different children start life with different or contradictory assumptions. The only fair start is for all children to start from scratch, all on their own free from all assumptions or influences from parents or any other external authority. Parents have no right to assume anything on behalf of their children.

Truth must be self-evident. It must stand up its intrinsic merits and not on the recommendation of any external authority. It cannot be accepted merely to a particular son of god. Truth needs no recommendation from any external authority, however high it might be. Truth must bear its own stamp of genuineness. It can be accepted only if it tallies with our reason and life experience. Any thing forced down the throat by God or church or any other outside authority will remain totally undigested, altogether alien and meaningless. For any individual that alone is truth which integrates with his self. One's own self or conscience or mind, whatever you call it, is one's final authority for the acceptance or rejection of any truth.

Rationalists are predominantly anti-religious, because the greatest amount of irrationality is found in religions. In their opinion all organised religions are pseudo-religions, that militate against reason and common sense. Their life experience is a contradiction of the so-called revealed truths of religions. Therefore, organised religions are their enemy number one. Science on the other hand, takes its stand on reason and verifiable truths. Therefore, science is their foremost ally, and they plead for a scientific outlook on life. A sort of scientific humanism is the only religion of a rationalist.

Different religions start with different assumptions, all arbitrary and most contradictory to one another. Moreover, most of these assumptions militate against our reason, common sense, experience etc. One assumption is that it is an inborn instinct in children to pray to god. The primary instinct in children is the craving for food. They have also the instinct for bodily exertion

because that is indispensable for securing food. Another instinct is the sex instinct which is necessary for the propagation of the species. No child will kneel down in prayer if he had not been brainwashed in early life. Belief in god or prayer is certainly not an instinct in man. Another assumption is that there is life after death. But there is absolutely no proof for such a life. The existence of hell and heaven is another arbitrary assumption. It may be noted that belief in god, prayer, hell and heaven is not an indispensable element of religion. There is no such belief either in Buddhism or Jainism, which also are religions.

Another assumption of religions is the connection between religion and morality. Religionists assert that there can be no morality without religion. Rationalists on the other hand maintain that the two are incompatible and that where there is religion there can be no morality. Most religions hold the view that the salvation of the individual depends not on his good deeds but on the grace of god. Such a belief is a disincentive to virtuous deeds. The basis of religious morality is hollow. We are asked to be moral in order to please god or to go to heaven, and not for the sake of a good life on earth. This is the wrong incentive. Statistics prove that the standard of morality is higher among non believers than among believers.

It is commonly held that religions have done much good and little harm. But the historic truth is just the opposite. Religion claims to make man more moral. We have disproved this in the preceding para. Religion also claims to unite people. True, a kind of superficial unity prevails among people of the same religious belief. But such unity within the fold necessarily means disunity outside. Religions set up barriers against another. Christianity that unites the Christians acts as a barrier against the rest of the world. The exclusiveness of religions militates against the all-inclusiveness of life, of mankind. The basis of world unity can be only morality and not religion. It is also held that religion provides a stimulus to life and feeds our emotion. It is the emotional content of religion that has led to intolerance, persecution and religious wars. Emotion out of reason's control is madness. Nature provides a stimulus to life which is healthy and not at all dangerous like

the artificial religious stimulus. More blood has been shed in the world for the cause of religion than for any other cause. Witch hunt, burning heretics, the crusades, wars between the Catholics and the Protestants, and the Hindu-Muslim riots in India, all these form the blackest chapter in the history of man.

Religion has been with us from the beginning and will be with us till the end, is a common saying. But it is untrue. Small pox, cholera, were all with man for quite a long time. But now they have been wiped away from the face of the earth. Similarly we may foresee the time when men are no longer religious but only rational and moral. Religions caused tremendous havoc in the world in the past, and they continue to do so even now. Recent developments in free India prove what a curse religion can be to a country. Only disassociation of politics from religion and a genuine policy of secularism can help solve the problems that plague India.

Rationalists have to struggle hard in order to get even with the religionists. There is heavy weightage in favour of religionists. Organised religions, the vested interests behind them and the dominant exploiting class that control power and wealth and mass media propagate widely that the arbitrary assumptions of religions are axiomatic truths. Existence of a personal god and efficacy of prayer are taken for granted, and those that question them are considered outcasts and black sheep, enemies of mankind. This bluff of the champions of status quo should be thoroughly exposed and the above weightage removed so as to place both the religionists and the free thinkers on a par with each other. Let there be free play of ideas among both within the framework of mutual tolerance. Let there be clash of ideas but not cracking of heads.

(To be concluded)

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## Join the Indian Rationalist Association

The Indian Rationalist Association is a national organization actively engaged in the building up of an effective rationalist mass movement. Delhi is the headquarters of the association and we have branches in several states.

The Indian Rationalist Association fights religion as it is an exploitative structure. It also fights caste-system, superstitions, blind beliefs and all sorts of exploitation. It strives for the establishment of a new secular culture, parallel to the denounced religious culture. It promotes inter-religious and inter-caste marriages. It highlights scientific temper and spirit of inquiry. While criticising religious and social evils, rationalists are courageous enough to abstain from them also. A rationalist does not practise religion or caste in his personal life.

- ☐ If you have already a rationalist group, we request you to make it a branch/unit of Indian Rationalist Association so that the efforts for an integrated, co-ordinated rationalist movement could be further strengthened by your joining together as an integral part of the national rationalist movement.
- ☐ If you are an individual rationalist, please take initiative to organize a small group of rationalists. You may explain to other like minded people the aims and objectives of the association. Once the group is formed, make it a part of Indian Rationalist Association. We shall connect you to similar groups working in areas closer to you.

For more details and a copy of the Rules and Regulations of Indian Rationalist Association, please write to :



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General Secretary  
Indian Rationalist Association  
Post Box No. 2713  
Karol Bagh  
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